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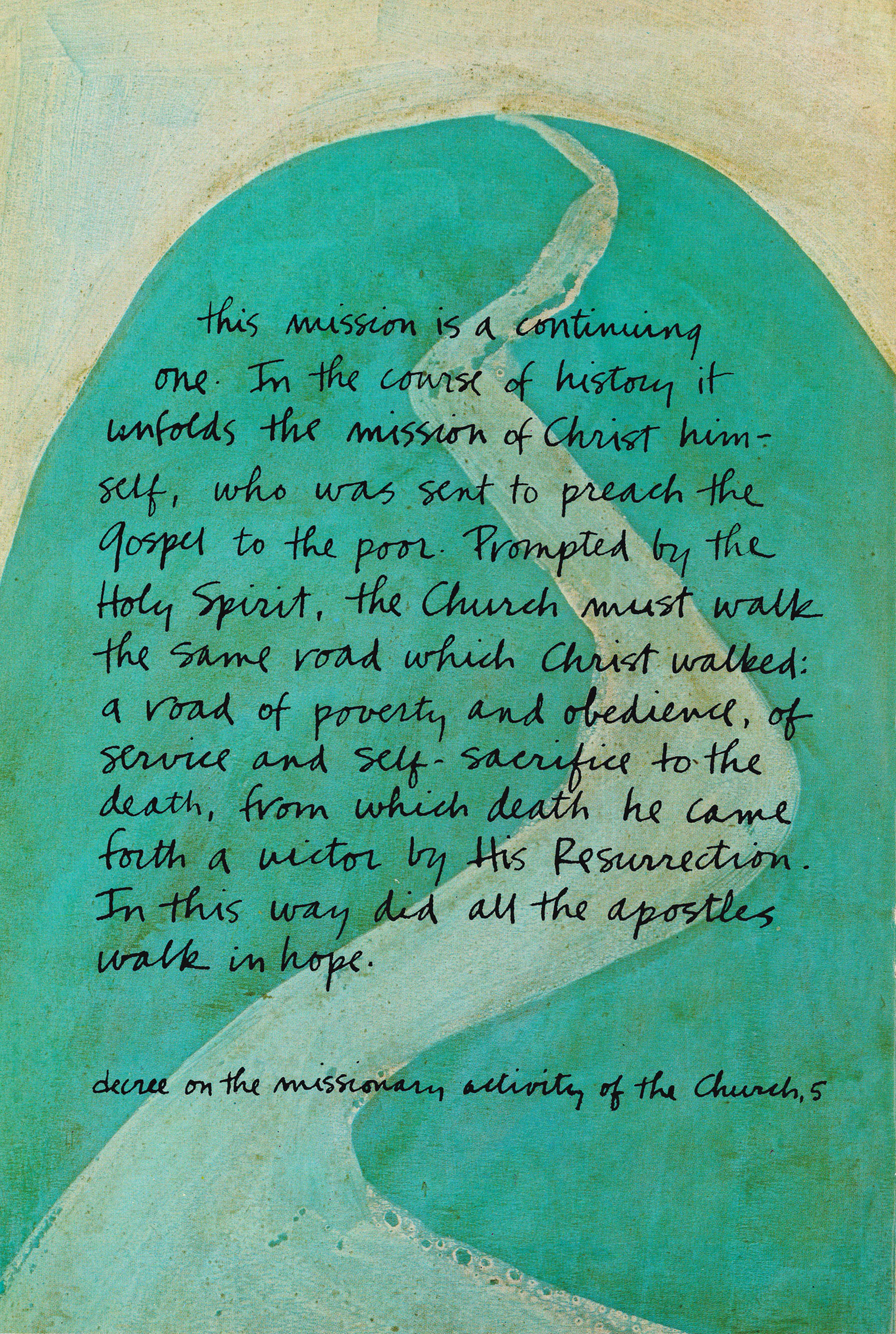

this mission is a continuing one. In the course of history it unfolds the mission of Christ himself, who was sent to preach the gospel to the poor. Prompted by the Holy Spirit, the Church must walk the same road which Christ walked: a road of poverty and obedience, of service and self-sacrifice to the death, from which death he came forth a victor by His Resurrection. In this way did all the apostles walk in hope.

decree on the missionary activity of the Church, 5

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The WORK

# of Man

By *Sister Estelle Demers*

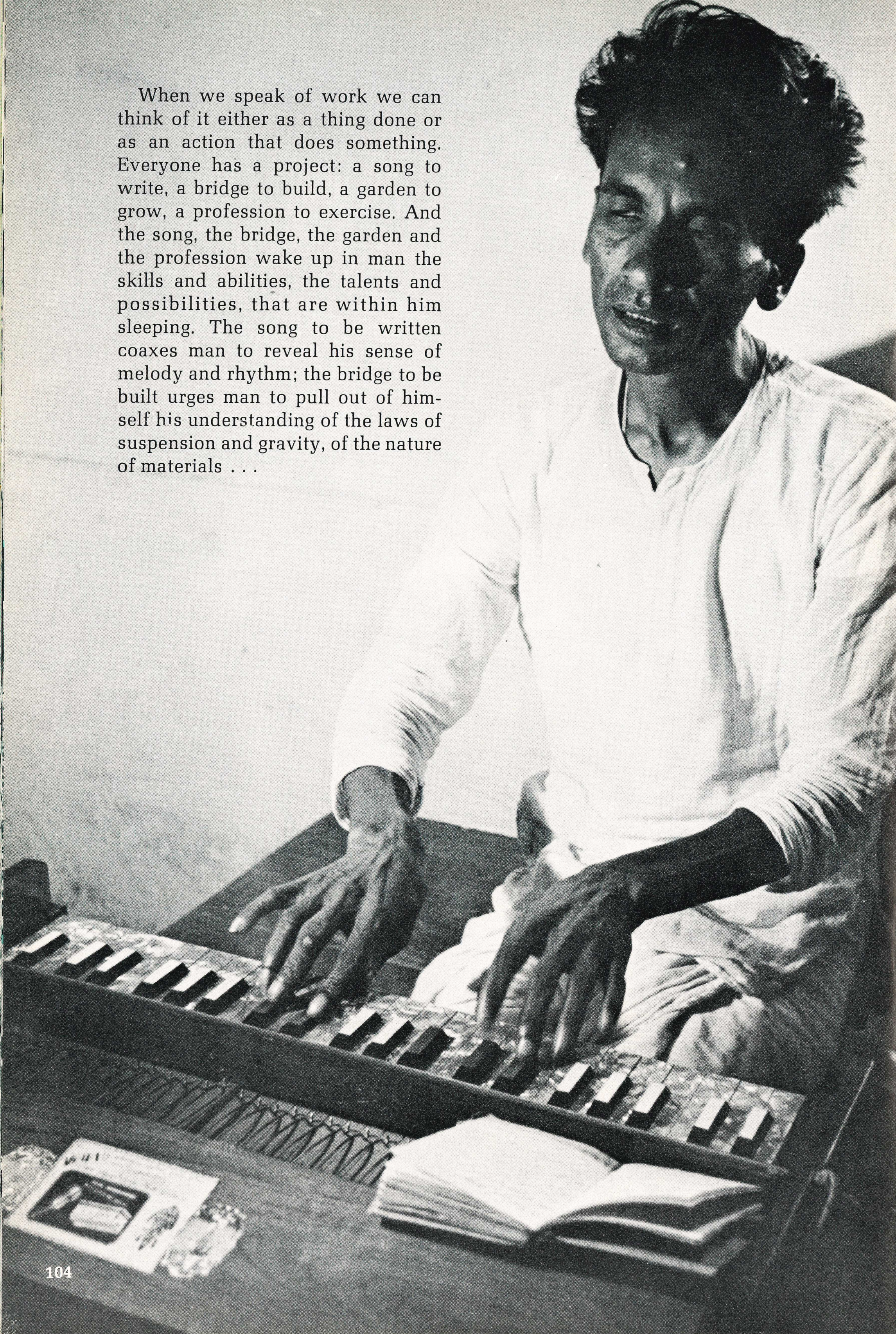
Work makes a man and sustains him. Without work man is hungry, not merely for food in the physical sense, but for some vital reality absent from the core of his manhood.

Through work man communicates with his world, and the world in turn communicates to him his identity as man, and with it, confidence in his personal value and ability. Without work man is a diminished self. His aspirations and dreams become diminished also, often leading him from reality into a world isolated from his fellow man. Work, a graphic commentary on man's personal value, reinforces man's pleasure in being a man. Through it man establishes himself in the universe as the one who has dominion, as the one who maintains order by drawing all of the powers of nature into a harmonious whole. He discovers that he is the wonder-full man spoken of in the first chapters of Genesis and Psalm 8:

Hardly less than angels you
created him, and honor, glory,
showered on him. Authority you
gave him over the works of your
hands. You placed all things
beneath his feet.

The coconut industry, Thuruthipuram, So. India.

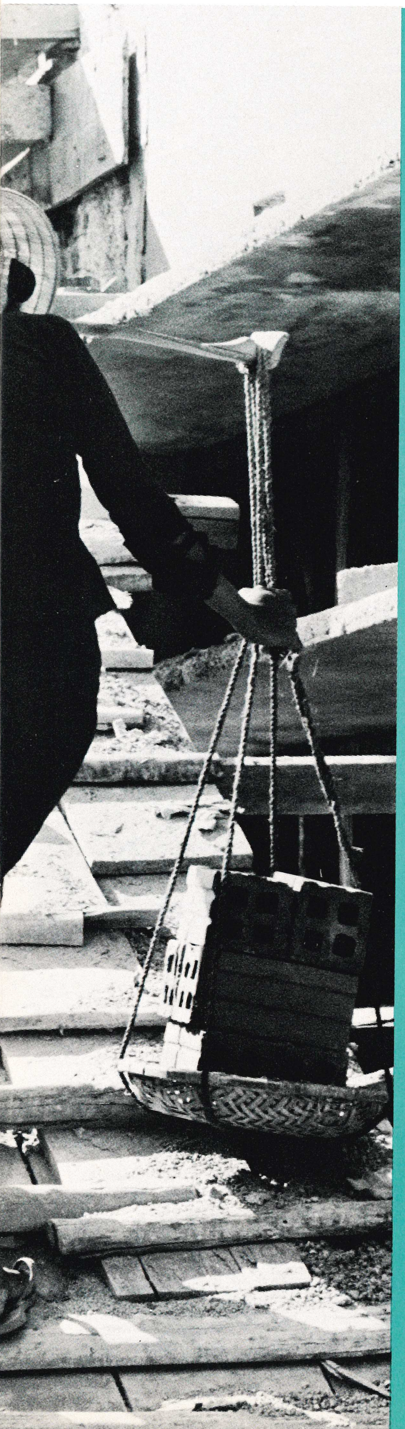
When we speak of work we can think of it either as a thing done or as an action that does something. Everyone has a project: a song to write, a bridge to build, a garden to grow, a profession to exercise. And the song, the bridge, the garden and the profession wake up in man the skills and abilities, the talents and possibilities, that are within him sleeping. The song to be written coaxes man to reveal his sense of melody and rhythm; the bridge to be built urges man to pull out of himself his understanding of the laws of suspension and gravity, of the nature of materials . . .



a garden to grow impels man to notice and reproduce the conditions that favor life; a case to be tried moves the lawyer to draw together his total knowledge of law and apply it to this case; people to be healed compel the doctor and nurse to understand the nature of disease in order to heal this one person. In a sense the song, the bridge, the garden and the patient are "calls" to men to become songwriter, bridge-builder, gardener, lawyer, doctor, nurse. Through the call, each discovers his ability, his capacity to create out of his own being, an answer.

The nature of man's life is revealed in the process of work: his life is like his work. Just as he cannot hold his life's work all together and all at once, neither can he take his life "in hand." His work can only be achieved bit by bit, so too his life. His working is a process, a bridge

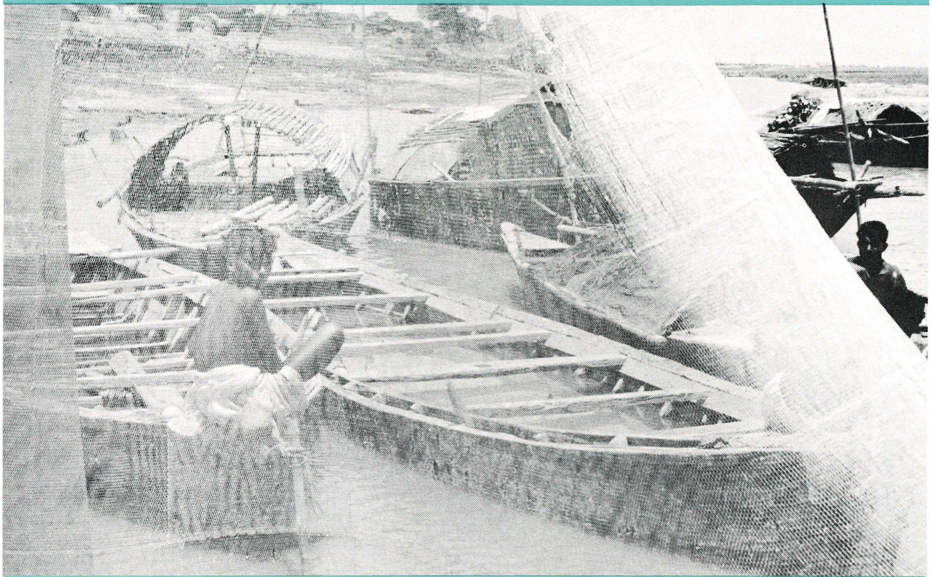
connecting his past achievements to the present ones, giving his life consistency and continuity. Like his works, man is a bundle of possibilities within himself, and he creates himself as he creates his world. Work tells man that he himself is in the process of becoming God's achievement, God's work of art.



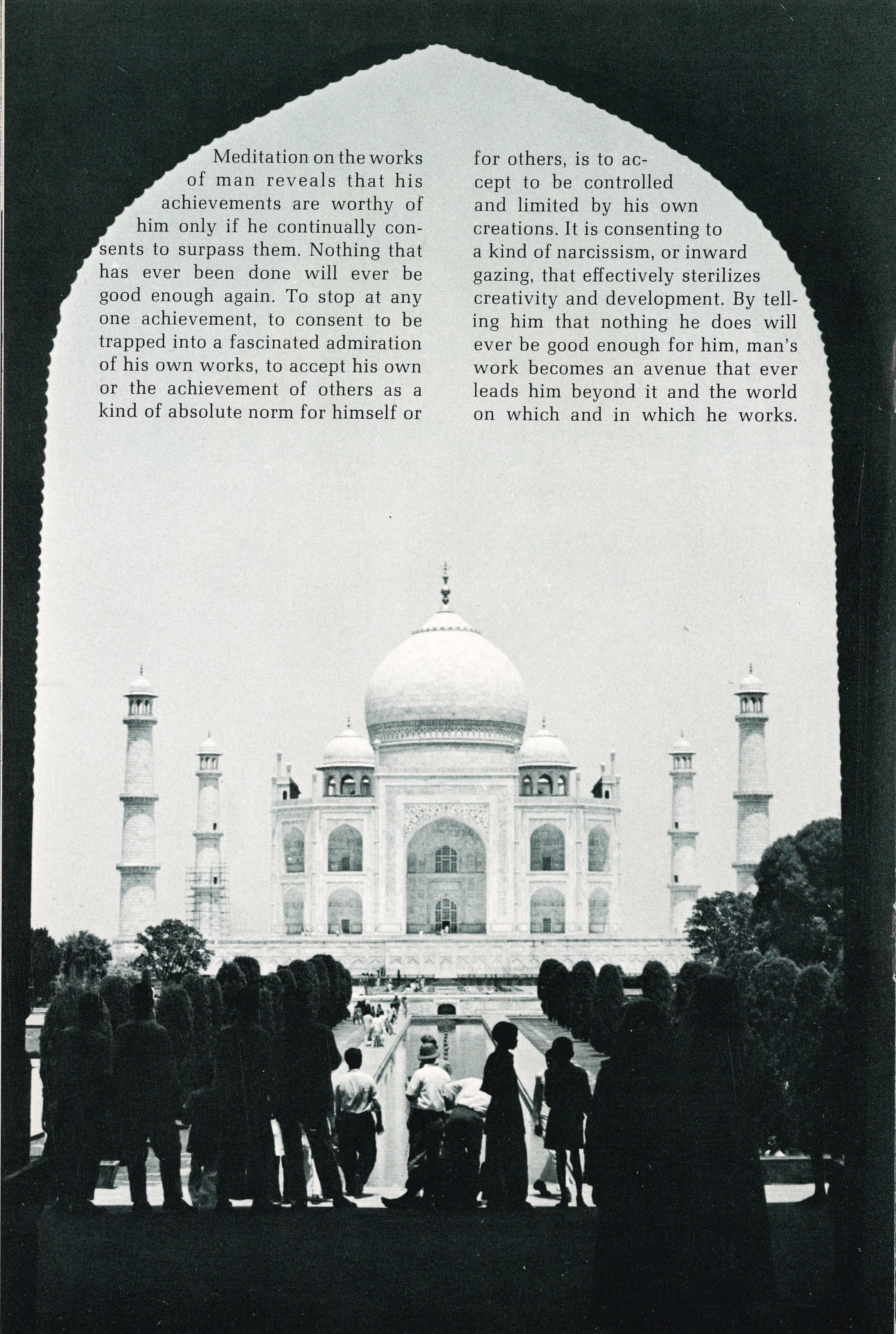
Work achieved is a mirror for man. It stands there as a testimony —man's spirit *can* shape his world. History is the story of man's attempts, some successful, others not, to create for himself new forms of the world where he can organize the powers of nature that he has tamed, collect all the achievements of his race; a place where he can see the expression of his aspirations, the richness of his inner life, his appreciation of beauty, his understanding of himself in the world.

This is why cultures, the accumulated works of men, need to be studied, appreciated, dwelt on, meditated, chewed up. Cultures are the key to

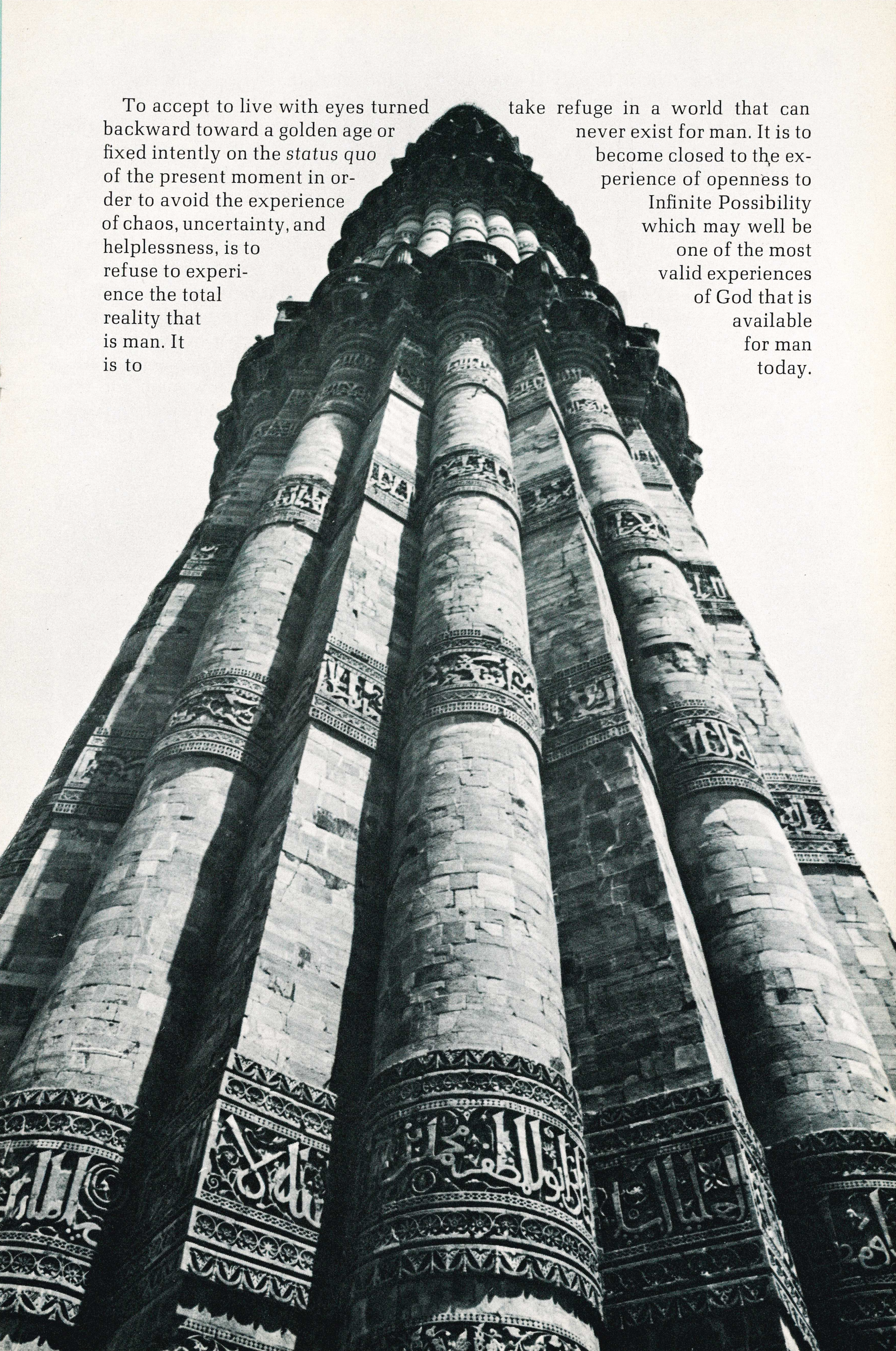
understanding what is in man's spirit. A man's culture is an instrument through which he comes to grips with his own inner reality. What is more real? The culture of the Americans, Asians, Africans or the spirit of the people that created it? What is more powerful? The weapons of destruction or the spirit of man who devised them? What is of more value? The technology of healing or man's inner concern for the suffering of his fellow men that motivated the discovery? Man's works lead man to a truer knowledge of himself, because they are a commentary on the primacy of his spirit.



Meditation on the works of man reveals that his achievements are worthy of him only if he continually consents to surpass them. Nothing that has ever been done will ever be good enough again. To stop at any one achievement, to consent to be trapped into a fascinated admiration of his own works, to accept his own or the achievement of others as a kind of absolute norm for himself or for others, is to accept to be controlled and limited by his own creations. It is consenting to a kind of narcissism, or inward gazing, that effectively sterilizes creativity and development. By telling him that nothing he does will ever be good enough for him, man's work becomes an avenue that ever leads him beyond it and the world on which and in which he works.

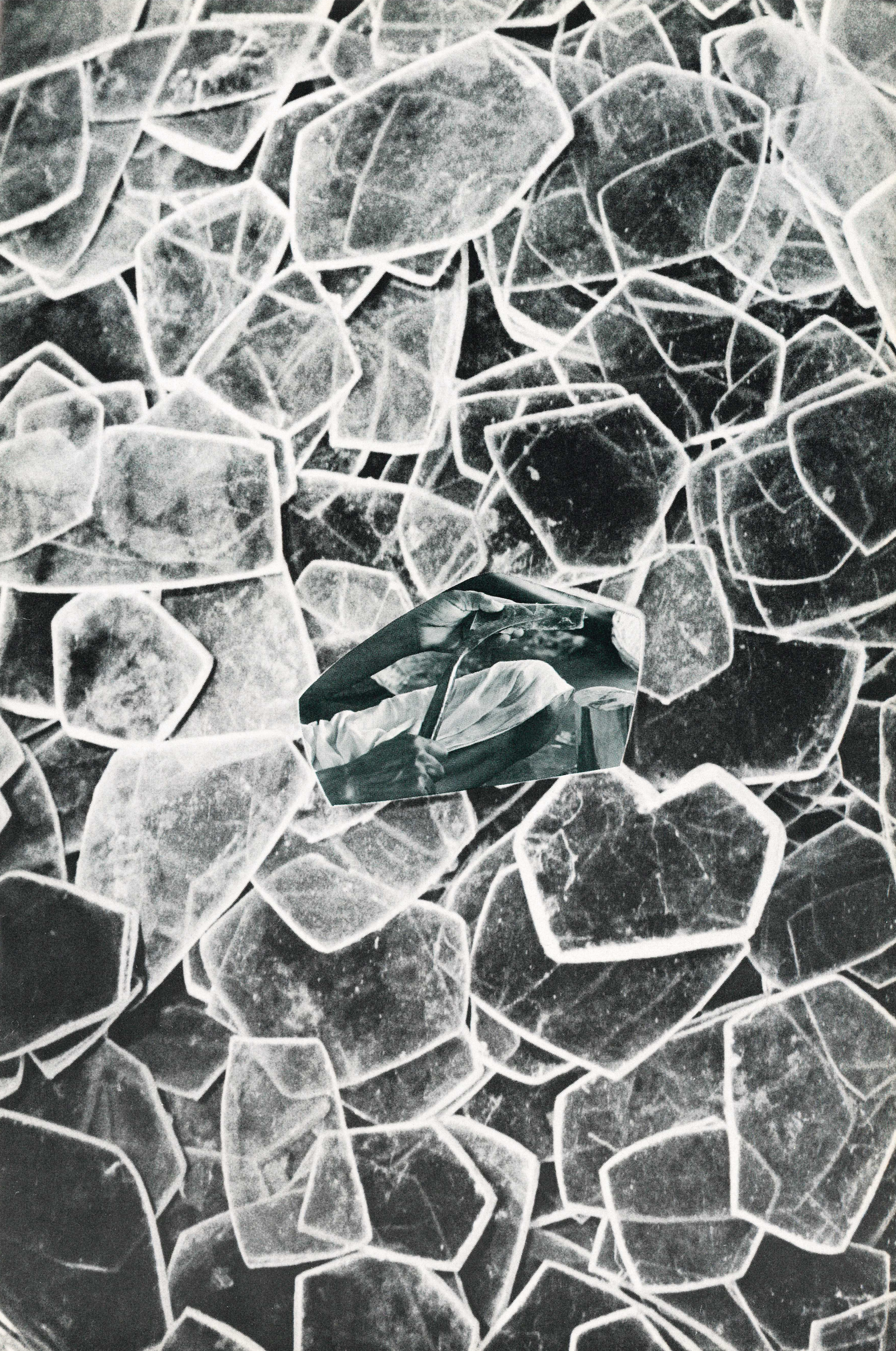


To accept to live with eyes turned backward toward a golden age or fixed intently on the *status quo* of the present moment in order to avoid the experience of chaos, uncertainty, and helplessness, is to refuse to experience the total reality that is man. It is to take refuge in a world that can never exist for man. It is to become closed to the experience of openness to Infinite Possibility which may well be one of the most valid experiences of God that is available for man today.



It seems that it is only if man is willing to see and understand his work, to hear its unfailing cry for completion by a further and better work that he will also understand his own inner groaning for fulfillment, and with it, begin to experience his need for redemption, for reconciliation with his world, his co-workers, and his God. Only if he looks at and listens to his work and takes to heart what it has to show and tell him will he be able to pass from pride that settles down to the idolatrous worship of his own work to the truth that he himself is Another's work in the process of completion. Only if he understands that the work that brings him the meaning and pleasure of being a man is in reality drawn out of him by the needs of men will he be able to pass from egoism to love. Only if he knows that his work is achieved simply to be a stepping stone to a further achievement can he learn to 'let go,' to not hoard his achievement like a treasure, to detach himself from it in order to be able to strive for another. Man's work can lead him to the truth of his own being, the love of his fellow man, and the freedom for his own heart to forever surpass the greatness of the greatest of his achievements.

Mica mines, Kodarma, India.



A man who has seen, really seen his work, loved it, and understood it, could never fear or oppose change, progress or the development of his tradition. He knows that each achievement cries out for a further one. Each is a launching pad into his future task. Each speaks to him of his own incompleteness. Each is a witness to the piece-meal nature of his existence, making him realize over and over his powerlessness to reproduce himself unfailingly and completely in any or all of his undertakings. A new effort, always a new effort, is needed to express who he is becoming. It is, it seems, the continuous groaning of his spirit to be fulfilled by the Spirit.

The creativity of man is not really an ephemeral power possessed by only a few great men. It is more this: man has within himself the infinite possibility to give new meaning to his life. Creativity is man's normal attitude in the face of reality. Man's choice is either to adapt himself to reality or to adapt reality to himself. Man is not meant to be driven into hiding through fear of his environment. He is not meant to escape from the demands of life nor the threat of frustration. Man is meant to have dominion over the powers of nature to bring them to fruitfulness. He is meant to bring nature and all that is in it, together with himself, to the state of the New Creation.

Why else is man made in God's image if not to be like him, creatively working always. "Prosper the work of our hands over us . . . prosper the work of our hands."

The WORK of God

By Sister Kristine Malins

Heavenly Father,

The world is in your hands. In the beginning you created it through the power of your Word, breathing within every living thing a tremendous movement to ripen and renew itself. Not a blind impulse this zest for life, but a response to a call—your Word —"Let there be. . . ."

And then you made man, that combination creature and creator, aware of his existence and responsible for directing himself and your world to maturity. "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and make it your own," you told him. You even shared with him a secret plan: that all human history is to be consummated in one man, Jesus Christ; everything in heaven or earth shall find fulfillment in him. And here is the staggering thing—in all which will one day belong to Christ you have promised man a share!

The son of a carpenter named Joseph, Jesus was a man no less than we. Luke reckoned him about 30 years old when he began his public ministry. And tradition has it that those previous "hidden years" were spent at work in his father's shop. There Jesus learned the feel of the wood, the strength of the nails, the back-breaking effort involved in getting the job done.

Then one day he left the shop and began to preach, to heal and to prepare to die.

> *"It is the Father who lives in me who carries out his work through me . . . If you cannot believe my words, then believe me because of what you see me do . . ."* (Jn. 14:10)
>
> *". . . the blind are recovering their sight, cripples are walking again, lepers are being healed, the deaf hearing, dead men are being brought to life again, and the good news is being given to those in need . . ."* (Luke 1, 22)
>
> *"For the Son of Man has come not to be served but to serve, and to give his life to set many others free."* (Mark 10:45)

What a headline that would have made, "Carpenter's son astounds the nation as rabbi and prophet."

People sensed that ring of authority in his words. Yet he was too much for some of them; they could not quite believe him. After all what could a youthful craftsman from a small town do or say that was important?

Jesus simply did your will, heavenly Father, allowed you to work your wonders through him. Because he did so, your greatest work was to raise him from an ignominious death on the cross and seat him at your right hand in a permanent state of glory and power. For this reason, every knee should bend at the name of Jesus and every tongue confess that he is Lord of the Universe.

Jesus is a man no greater than we, baptized as we are into his death and resurrection. Because of him, we are not merely stewards, but heirs—Christ-men, Christians. "And the task before us now if we would not perish is to build the earth." (Teilhard de Chardin)

Yet, Father, look at man, this being with whom you have shared your creativity, your freedom and your immortality. In so many places, he fits Edward Markham's picture:

> *"Bowed by the weight of centuries he leans*
> *Upon his hoe and gazes on the ground,*
> *The emptiness of ages in his face,*
> *And on his back the burden of the world."*

Overworked, poor, hungry, sick . . . man squanders his inheritance through ignorance or disease or sin, his splendid destiny seemingly forgotten.

Can it be that men will not build the earth until they die for it? Jesus said it once. A man who lives his own life will destroy it, but the man who gives up his life in this world will preserve it for eternity. (Jn. 12:25) Heavenly Father, this must be the meaning of our work, our suffering, our death. Give us the courage to follow Jesus even in his failure, so that we may enjoy the success of his glory. Our guarantee of future life is his Spirit within us—"that passion of eternity," the "music and the dream" of existence—your brooding, creating, penetrating Spirit that will fashion from the paradox of human misery a perfect world. Amen.

God is there where the tiller is tilling the hard ground
and where the pathmaker is breaking stones. He is with them . . .

in sun and in shower,
and his garment is covered with
dust.
Put off your holy mantle
and even like him
come down on the dusty soil!

Deliverance?
Where is this deliverance to be found?

Our master himself has joyfully
taken upon him the bonds of creation;
he is bound with us all forever.
Come out of your meditations
and leave aside your flowers
and incense.
What harm is there if your clothes
become tattered and stained?
Meet him and stand by him
in toil and in sweat of your brow.

(*Gitanjali*, Rabindranath Tagore)

THE WORK OF THE CHURCH

By Sister Mary Elizabeth Johnson

Medical Mission Sisters are women who commit themselves to make present in the world the love of Christ by medical mission work. Bound by the common law of labor . . . theirs is a work of love, justice and effective concern for those in need . . . (Constitution)

Today there is something different happening in our world. Not that God is newly present there; He always has been. Today the *Church* is present in the world, and there is growing unity of the two. Today religious women, joined to the Church in a special way, are choosing to strengthen and intensify this embryonic identification between Church and world. To achieve this, many have embarked upon a new road, and it is leading them straight into the heart of secular society.

The motivation for religious life in the past was based on negation, detachment, a walled-in-service of God. But this was not what Mother Anna Dengel intended her community to be. From the beginning she was convinced that we women who are "the religious" are called to be "in the thick of it," reacting to the stimuli of change. The reason for our life would not be to provide a haven of security for ourselves. Religious life would be for us as a new frontier.

Because we came together to do God's work in the world, our religious vocation can only be a dimension of our secular vocation. Our duty as religious women is to make Christ present in the world, to relate in warm, personal ways with the people of God. We are women *sent to* not *hidden from* people. It is a pilgrim state we live in, and we are pilgrims with our neighbors "to show ourselves," "to be," "to work with," not to remain behind our walls whether they be of brick or of cloth. Therefore our vocation is *essentially apostolic.* We have an apostolic commitment and it cannot be done half way.

An apostle means "one sent" and Father Orsy calls this apostolic way, creative activity. We have a charism to exist for society, to go out to others. The very active word "healing" has today taken to itself meanings that, although they were there before, only in the present age have come to light. Health means more than freedom from physical disease. It is knowing how to prevent an illness. It is learning to live sensibly and wisely in order to insure the best of physical health. Of equal or more importance is a well-being both mental and spiritual. In our hospitals, clinics, on our medical safaris, it is not only the malaria parasite, the typhoid bacillus or the ruptured spleen that is being treated or operated upon. It is of cardinal importance that the *whole* man or woman or child harboring the parasite or bacillus or damaged spleen be treated and loved and cured. To make this kind of care the norm of our life and work, we must know, be interested in, be with, the people to whom we hope to bring Christ.

This is a mammoth task. It means that we must be open to the Spirit of God, that we must work *in his world.* To do this necessitates the keeping of our prayer, government and community life flexible so that we build into our very way of life the element of openness, so that we are utterly available.

If we say we are an essentially apostolic community and our particular call is to do God's work in the world, then everything about our life — our prayer, our coming together as a community, our life-style, our vows—must be seen in the light of the apostolate, or work. To define religious vocation according to these terms calls for a radical change of perspective. Anything that hinders our work or restricts our availability

must be scrutinized and, if necessary, changed.

Religious life is a life especially concerned with prayer. Active undertakings are, in great part, the spiritual life of an active community. This does not mean that our prayer life is simply and wholly that of frenzied activity. But it does mean that the most absorbing task can actually be for us our prayer. This is not a limitation of prayer, but in fact a broadening of its scope to include not only private and community prayer, but also our very tangible "labors of love." All our activities, however, find their contemporary spiritual focus in the great liturgical celebration, the Mass. Even more than in the past, our prayer life today pivots on a scriptural-liturgical axis. And yet, while emphasis is on Church-centered prayer, responsibility for growth in Christ-life remains personal, allowing within the rhythm of each one's life a notable area for private prayer according to the needs and psychology of the individual.

In the light of our essentially apostolic call, we take another look at our vows and our community life. Our vows are not, have never been, a bind to keep us from our primary call, to live for others. They exist to free us from ourselves, to help us fulfill our vocation of service.

We live in community where the unity of members is a goal toward which we strive daily. In community we live with an authority that promotes consensus of its members. This authority holds a love that encircles all in a wholehearted service, allowing members of the community "to be," as fruitfully as possible, for others. As a community we work together at apostolic tasks, assisting each to make her own contribution

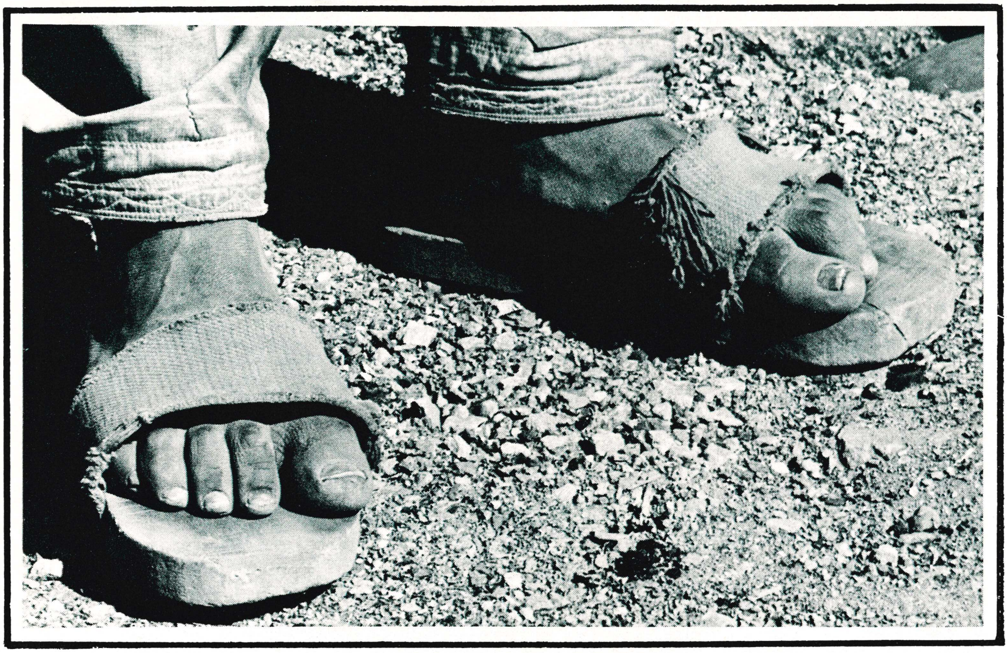
to this work and to our shared life in a way that develops to the full the powers and abilities she has. In our medical work we can never be too conscious of the need to meet, love and treat the *whole* individual. Opportunities abound, and they begin at home within community.

We, as an apostolic community, must announce with our lives the mission call of Christ, "Come and see." It is something we repeat again and again as we grow in friendship, initiative and professional competence. Because of friends we have, we learn better to know and love Christ. With Schillebeeckx we agree that we cannot aim at a mere adaptation to our times, rather we are *in* our times. The concrete contents of our life as medical missionaries assume apostolic dimensions solely in confrontation with our present secularized world. "Certainly if you love you accommodate yourself," said Mother Dengel.

Our religious life grows from an inspiration that is groping for an authentic expression in everyday life. Because Christ cares, we care and are urged to move in the forefront of the Church's medical work. We hear St. Paul say to the Romans: "By obeying the Spirit, you are on the way to real living." Our work is indeed, with all its ramifications, a labor of love.

I am of the road, a pilgrim, in Your name, sent to those to whom You cannot go, to those brothers, of every color whom you are commanded to feed and clothe and love and to whom, because of one reason or another, You cannot go . . . and only then in the community of friendship and care for the other do I meet face to face with my God.

(*LISTEN GOD*, Christopher Jones)



When I stand before You
at the day's end
You shall see my scars
and know that I had my wounds
and also my healing.
(Stray Birds, Rabindranath Tagore)

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Plowing a field in Mandar, India.

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pp. 98-9:	*Brick factory, Rawalpindi, West Pakistan.*
pp. 100-01:	*Rice paddy, Vietnam.*
pp. 104-05:	*Indian musician; farmer in Mandar, India.*
pp. 106-07:	*Peshawar, W. Pakistan; So. Vietnam; Patna, India.*
pp. 108-09:	*Peshawar, W. Pakistan; Quinhon, So. Vietnam.*
pp. 110-11:	*A laundry in Rawalpindi, W. Pakistan; fishermen in Patna, India; a dentist, Dacca, E. Pakistan; tanning hides, Uganda.*
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p. 126:	*Making new friends, Patna, India.*
p. 127:	*Operating room, Holy Family Hospital, Quinhon, So. Vietnam.*
p. 128:	*Rawalpindi, W. Pakistan.*

And He said to them: "Follow me"... And they left their nets at once and followed Him.
(Matthew 4:19,20)